

trying again. To say the least, we will be watching the ledgers with an eagle eye. And committee members will be double checking out in the field as well.

Out there in the trenches, they also need a lot more language training. Indeed, this is a chronic deficiency throughout most of the Intelligence Community. This year, I was most pleased to work with my colleague across the aisle, Representative ROEMER, to increase funds for language training. Our people in the field need to be able to communicate and interpret accurately. This also is an area I intend to pursue in the future.

The Intelligence Committee provides very vigorous oversight and has a good track record for finding deficiencies, excesses and problems. We will continue to do our job, and we ask your support for our bill.

Mr. BASS. Mr. Chairman, as a member of both the Budget and Intelligence committees, I have been especially sensitive to what we call top line issues—how much money is available overall, and whether it is generally adequate.

Pressures to keep down the allocations for defense have also had an adverse "trickle down" effect on intelligence, since intelligence is funded within the defense top line. For the last decade, intelligence lost a large part of its buying power, after absorbing reductions both indirectly from inflation and directly from budget resolutions.

In this regard, we recently suffered several particularly bad years. The administration's request this year increased somewhat, providing partial relief from the decline. Striving to remain within established financial boundaries, the committee gave the national intelligence agencies only slightly more than the request. The service portion of the budget, where we share jurisdiction with Armed Services, enjoyed greater increases. This willingness to sacrifice a share of the hard-pressed military budget acknowledges the heavy service dependence on tactical intelligence, and the need to improve it.

The situation among the national agencies is also problematic. Most of them have been squeezed for a decade and are showing the effects. Personnel numbers have been reduced significantly, but even if reductions continue, it is a struggle to keep personnel costs at the same budget percentage, because the costs per individual are climbing steeply. Personnel are used mainly to process and report the large amounts of collected information; but there are many fewer available to do this, even as much more data pours in from sensors that must become increasingly sophisticated in order to keep up with the targets. As a result, this "downstream" part of the business, and our overall efficiency, are suffering greatly.

Among the major intelligence agencies, the National Security Agency is particularly hard pressed, since targets and their communications, radar and telemetry technology have been changing at a dramatic pace. NSA requires nearly complete re-tooling to catch up and keep up, but this costs a lot of money. NSA's budget has been in steady decline.

On the imagery side, the struggle to pay for exploitation and dissemination of the large volume of imagery required especially by military customers is pretty well known. This is another "downstream" problem exacerbated by declining numbers of human photo-interpreters.

Five years ago, the House Intelligence Committee warned the administration that we must find a way to make our satellite collectors much less expensive, or the NRO would take a growing portion of the declining intelligence budget, and we be unable to use effectively what they collect. We lost that budget battle. However, it is now clear that our predictions were accurate. And the situation is getting even worse because of cost overruns in NRO programs.

We realize that everyone wants a "peace dividend" that shifts money from national security programs to domestic priorities. We want one ourselves. However, the breakup of empires historically is accompanied by regional confusion and conflict such as we witness today. Continued U.S. involvement in regional stabilization efforts comes at a price, often a high price. In addition, the breadth and unacceptability of terrorism, narcotics trafficking, proliferation and other cross-border challenges present unique challenges at this particular time.

We are striving to make the Intelligence Community more efficient. We have done this within agencies and are suggesting a few precedent-shattering initiatives that cross agency boundaries, in both the communications and analyst areas. But there is only so much we can do, especially within the patchwork of compromises that makes up the congressional process. In several important areas, we are in trouble.

Mr. GOSS. Mr. Chairman, I yield back the balance of my time.

The CHAIRMAN. All time for general debate has expired.

1330

Mr. GOSS. Mr. Chairman, I move that the Committee do now rise.

The motion was agreed to.

Accordingly, the Committee rose; and the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. Dickey) having assumed the chair, Mr. THORNBERRY, Chairman of the Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union, reported that that Committee, having had under consideration the bill (H.R. 4392) to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2001 for intelligence and intelligence-related activities of the United States Government, the Community Management Account, and the Central Intelligence Agency Retirement and Disability System, and for other purposes, had come to no resolution thereon.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. GOSS. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on the bill (H.R. 4392) to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2001 for intelligence and intelligence-related activities of the United States Government, the Community Management Account, and the Central Intelligence Agency Retirement and Disability System, and for other purposes.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. Dickey). Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Florida?

There was no objection.

REMOVAL OF NAME OF MEMBER AS COSPONSOR OF HOUSE RESOLUTION 396

Mr. DICKEY. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to remove my name as a cosponsor of House Resolution 396?

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. THORNBERRY). Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Arkansas?

There was no objection.

ADJOURNMENT TO MONDAY, MAY 22, 2000

Mr. DICKEY. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that when the House adjourns today, it adjourn to meet at 12:30 p.m. on Monday next for morning hour debates.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Arkansas?

There was no objection.

DISPENSING WITH CALENDAR WEDNESDAY BUSINESS ON WEDNESDAY NEXT

Mr. DICKEY. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that the business in order under the Calendar Wednesday rule be dispensed with on Wednesday next.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Arkansas?

There was no objection.

WHO IS TO BLAME

(Mr. GIBBONS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. GIBBONS. Mr. Speaker, yesterday the White House announced that it would work to compensate the victims of the Los Alamos wildfire. Well, Mr. Speaker, how generous of the administration to compensate the victims of a wildfire which its own agency, the National Park Service, is responsible for starting.

Of course, neither the administration or the Park Service accepts responsibility for the environmental disaster that has left hundreds of people stranded, over 400 homes destroyed, and has burned almost 50,000 acres. Instead, they have pledged compensation, which will ultimately cost the American taxpayers millions of dollars.

Meanwhile, the local superintendent who has acknowledged responsibility for igniting the blaze, in spite of adverse weather warnings, was given a paid vacation. They might as well have said congratulations. Mr. Speaker, the National Park Service and its personnel need to be held responsible for their actions, especially when those actions result in such extensive environmental devastation.